

Education of students with disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that all children have available to them a free and appropriate education designed to meet their unique needs. Changes in the percentage of total elementary and secondary enrollment and the distribution of students with disabilities affect the level of effort required of educators and policymakers to comply with the current law and help them forecast the need for future resources.

- In 1996, children with disabilities receiving services in federally supported programs constituted 12 percent of all students enrolled in public schools (grades K–12), up from 8 percent in 1977.
- The number of students who participated in federal programs for children with disabilities increased 51 percent, between 1977 and 1996, rising from 3.7 to 5.6 million students (see supplemental table 45-1).
- Between 1977 and 1996, the percentage of children with specific learning disabilities as a percentage of total public school (grades K–12) enrollment rose from 2 to 6 percent, while those with speech or language impairments or mental retardation decreased by approximately 1 percentage point each.
- In 1995, 73 percent of public school children with disabilities were served in regular classrooms or resource rooms combined in a regular school building, while 23 percent were served in separate classes in regular school buildings (see supplemental table 45-2).

Children from birth to age 21 who were served by federally supported programs for students with disabilities, by type of disability: School years ending 1977–96

Type of disability	1977	1979	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1994	1995	1996
As a percentage of total public K–12 enrollment¹												
All disabilities²	8.3	9.3	10.1	10.8	11.0	11.0	11.3	11.6	12.0	12.2	12.2	12.4
Specific learning disabilities	1.8	2.7	3.6	4.4	4.7	4.8	4.9	5.2	5.5	5.5	5.6	5.8
Speech or language impairments	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3
Mental retardation	2.2	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3
Serious emotional disturbance	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0
Preschool disabled ³	(⁴)	(⁴)	(⁴)	(⁴)	(⁴)	(⁴)	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2
Percentage distribution												
All disabilities²	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Specific learning disabilities	21.6	29.1	35.3	40.9	42.5	43.8	43.6	44.7	45.9	45.4	46.3	46.3
Speech or language impairments	35.3	31.2	28.2	26.6	26.1	26.0	21.1	20.7	19.4	19.1	18.9	18.3
Mental retardation	26.0	23.2	20.0	17.8	16.1	14.7	12.7	11.2	10.1	10.1	10.3	10.2
Serious emotional disturbance	7.7	7.7	8.4	8.3	8.6	8.8	8.3	8.2	7.8	7.8	7.9	7.9
Preschool disabled ³	(⁴)	(⁴)	(⁴)	(⁴)	(⁴)	(⁴)	8.7	9.3	10.4	10.9	9.6	9.8

¹ Based on K–12 enrollment in public schools, including a small number of prekindergarten students.

² Included in the total but not shown separately are other types of disabilities.

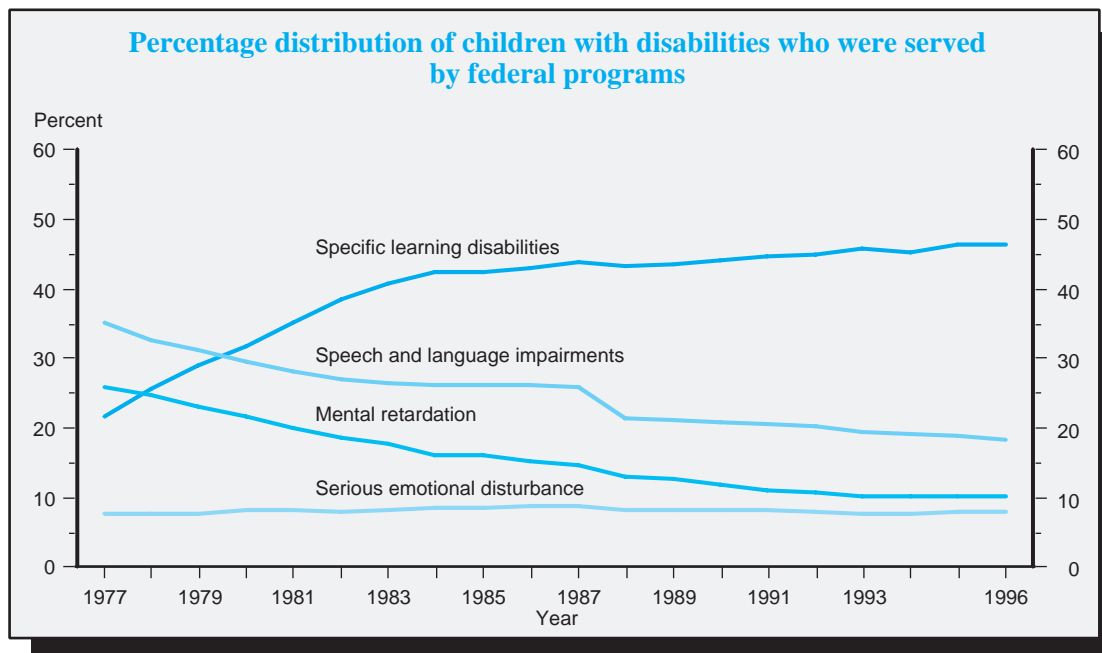
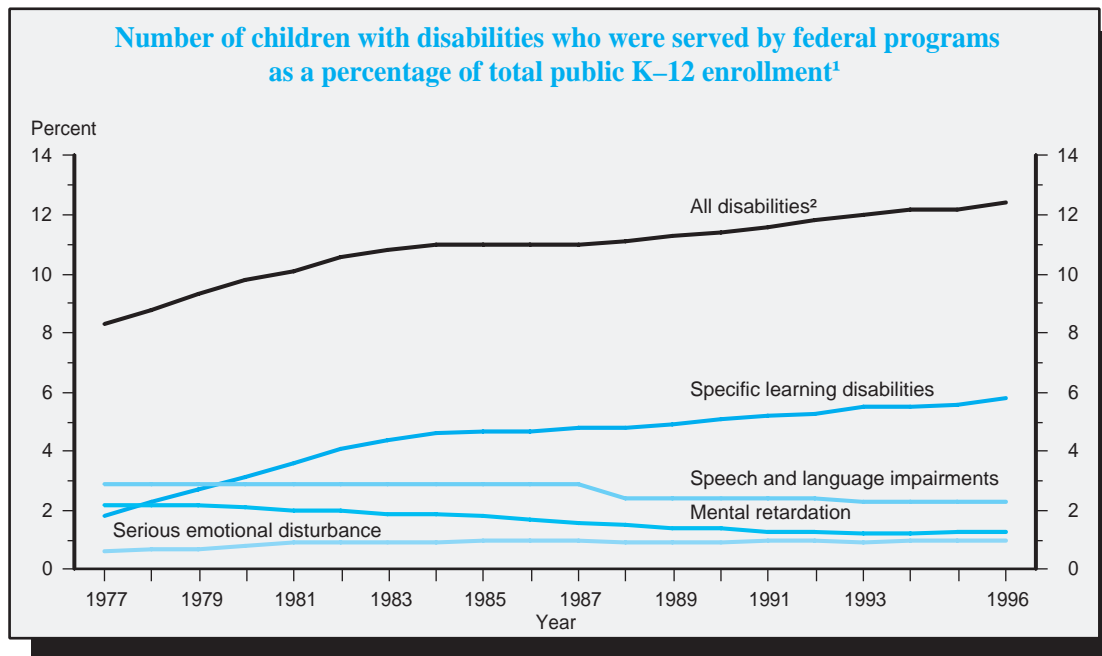
³ Includes preschool children ages 3–5 who were served under Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) and those ages 0–5 served under Part B of the IDEA.

⁴ Beginning in the 1987–88 school year, states were no longer required to report preschool students (ages 0–5) with disabilities by disabling conditions.

NOTE: This analysis includes students who were served under Chapter 1 of the ECIA and Part B of the IDEA. Data for 1977 through 1995 are revised from previously published figures.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, *Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, various years, and unpublished tabulations; and National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Survey.

Children from birth to age 21 who were served by federally supported programs for students with disabilities, by type of disability: School years ending 1977–96



¹ Based on K–12 enrollment in public schools, including a small number of prekindergarten students.

² Included in the total but not shown separately are other types of disabilities.

NOTE: This analysis includes students who were served under Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, *Annual Report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, various years, and unpublished tabulations; and National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Survey.

Table 45-1 Number of children from birth to age 21 who were served by federally supported programs for students with disabilities, by type of disability: School years ending 1977–96

Type of disability	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Number served (in thousands)										
All disabilities	3,692	3,751	3,889	4,005	4,142	4,198	4,255	4,298	4,315	4,317
Specific learning disabilities	796	964	1,130	1,276	1,462	1,622	1,741	1,806	1,832	1,862
Speech or language impairments	1,302	1,223	1,214	1,186	1,168	1,135	1,131	1,128	1,126	1,125
Mental retardation	959	933	901	869	829	786	757	727	694	660
Serious emotional disturbance	283	288	300	329	346	339	352	361	372	375
Hearing impairments	87	85	85	80	79	75	73	72	69	66
Orthopedic impairments	87	87	70	66	58	58	57	56	56	57
Other health impairments	141	135	105	106	98	79	50	53	68	57
Visual impairments	38	35	32	31	31	29	28	29	28	27
Multiple disabilities	—	—	50	60	68	71	63	65	69	86
Deaf-blindness	—	—	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
Preschool disabled ¹	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)	(²)

Type of disability	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994 ³	1995 ³	1996
Number served (in thousands)										
All disabilities	4,374	4,447	4,544	4,641	4,762	4,949	5,125	5,309	5,378	5,573
Specific learning disabilities	1,914	1,928	1,987	2,050	2,130	2,234	2,354	2,408	2,489	2,579
Speech or language impairments	1,136	953	967	973	985	997	996	1,014	1,015	1,022
Mental retardation	643	582	564	548	534	538	519	536	555	570
Serious emotional disturbance	383	373	376	381	390	399	401	414	427	438
Hearing impairments	65	56	56	57	58	60	60	64	64	67
Orthopedic impairments	57	47	47	48	49	51	52	56	60	63
Other health impairments	52	45	43	52	55	58	65	82	106	133
Visual impairments	26	22	23	22	23	24	23	24	24	25
Multiple disabilities	97	77	85	86	96	97	102	108	88	93
Deaf-blindness	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Preschool disabled ¹	(²)	363	394	422	441	484	531	578	519	544

— Not available.

¹ Includes preschool children ages 3–5 who were served under Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) and those ages 0–5 who were served under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

² Beginning in the 1987–88 school year, states were no longer required to report preschool students (ages 0–5) with disabilities by disabling condition.

³ Revised from previously published figures.

NOTE: This analysis includes students who were served under Chapter 1 of the ECIA and Part B of IDEA. Counts are based on reports from the 50 states and the District of Columbia only (i.e., figures from the U.S. territories are not included). Increases since 1987–88 are due in part to new legislation enacted in fall 1986, which mandates that public schools appropriate education services for all disabled children ages 3–5. Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, *Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, various years, and unpublished tabulations; and National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data Survey.

Table 45-2 Percentage of public school children ages 6–21 with disabilities who were served in various school environments, by type of disability: School years ending 1986–95

Type of disability	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Regular class/resource room combined in regular school building										
All disabilities	69.0	69.2	69.0	69.6	69.2	69.3	71.2	71.5	72.9	73.2
Specific learning disabilities	77.8	76.8	76.7	77.5	76.8	76.2	78.8	78.7	80.4	80.7
Speech or language impairments	94.7	93.9	94.6	94.6	94.6	92.8	94.6	92.5	95.1	95.1
Mental retardation	28.8	29.8	29.2	28.0	26.5	30.4	30.5	33.9	34.7	36.8
Serious emotional disturbance	44.1	46.0	45.5	44.2	43.5	45.9	43.6	46.3	46.2	46.1
Hearing impairments	43.8	46.9	45.4	48.2	45.3	46.6	47.6	49.2	50.5	54.4
Orthopedic impairments	48.0	47.5	45.7	47.8	48.6	51.7	53.4	55.1	58.1	59.7
Other health impairments	47.6	59.0	51.5	50.3	53.4	57.8	62.9	67.4	67.1	71.5
Visual impairments	62.6	62.3	63.1	65.0	62.8	65.3	60.8	66.6	66.4	67.0
Multiple disabilities	20.6	24.3	20.1	21.4	20.5	23.8	24.3	26.7	28.8	20.8
Deaf-blindness	26.0	26.1	15.2	17.0	24.6	16.9	12.1	22.0	15.7	18.1
Separate class in regular school building										
All disabilities	24.4	24.8	24.7	24.2	24.9	25.1	23.5	23.5	22.7	22.5
Specific learning disabilities	20.8	21.2	21.8	21.0	21.7	22.4	20.1	20.1	18.8	18.4
Speech or language impairments	3.7	4.1	3.8	3.8	3.8	5.6	3.9	6.0	4.5	4.5
Mental retardation	57.3	58.4	58.0	58.3	61.1	58.3	59.2	56.8	57.0	55.9
Serious emotional disturbance	36.1	36.8	34.5	35.8	37.1	35.8	36.9	35.2	35.3	35.2
Hearing impairments	32.5	32.9	35.1	33.4	31.7	32.8	31.3	28.1	30.6	28.6
Orthopedic impairments	31.0	33.4	32.0	33.7	34.7	33.1	34.4	34.1	33.3	31.7
Other health impairments	24.8	19.9	18.8	19.6	24.6	26.3	21.5	20.6	21.3	18.5
Visual impairments	19.2	21.9	21.0	20.6	21.1	19.9	19.6	18.0	18.3	17.2
Multiple disabilities	44.5	48.2	46.6	46.8	43.7	42.8	47.1	44.6	44.1	51.3
Deaf-blindness	22.2	37.5	36.9	29.6	29.9	32.0	36.5	31.4	34.2	36.2

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, *Nineteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, table AB2.